

# Morphological Paradigms and Gender-Number Concord: A Comparison of Learners of L2 French, L2 Spanish, and L3 Italian

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This paper presents results from a large-scale study comparing post-pubescent, English-speaking learners of French ( $n=66$ ) and Spanish ( $n=85$ ) as a second language, and of Italian ( $n=54$ ) as a third language after having previously studied French or Spanish. It concerns the development of targetlike gender and number morphology on determiners and adjectives, both in terms of comprehension and production, at three different university course levels. At issue is the extent to which language-particular morphological paradigms – which range from highly transparent (Spanish) to highly opaque (French) – result in language-particular development and how this might relate to the more general debate on L2 attainment with respect to abstract features, their representation, and their surface realization (e.g., Hawkins & Franceschina, 2004 vs. White et al., 2004).

I demonstrate, with reference to findings already presented in Author (under review-a; under review-b) that the relatively transparent gender-number morphological paradigm of Spanish and ‘alliterative agreement’ one finds in both oral and written noun phrases in that language (e.g., *estas camisas blancas* “these white shirts”) result in earlier and greater targetlike accuracy among L2 learners than the relatively opaque system of French (e.g., *ces chemises blanches*); data collected and currently under statistical analysis from learners of L3 Italian – more similar to Spanish than to French in this respect (e.g., *queste camicie bianche*) – will be able to inform us as to where they fit along the continuum. Despite language-particular differences in morphological paradigms, however, learners of both L2 Spanish and L2 French show similar behavior with respect to the overgeneralization of particular forms in particular contexts, largely involving masculine singular. Again, data collected from learners of L3 Italian will inform us as to whether this is also the case in a language being studied after previous exposure to a *typologically* similar, but not necessarily *paradigmatically* similar, L2.

Author (under review-a). \_\_\_\_\_. Submitted to *Applied Psycholinguistics*.

Author (under review-b). \_\_\_\_\_. Submitted to *Journal of French Language Studies*.

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